

To the Honorable Commissioners of the FCC,

We, the Global Resource Action Center for the Environment, are writing to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. We are voicing our support to retain all the FCC rules in question. These rules set limits on concentration of the broadcast industry and serve the public interest by preserving diversity of ownership in the broadcast marketplace.

Democracy is an ongoing project, not merely the absence of dictatorship and the presence of elections. An uneducated and uninformed populace is a mob, and its leaders are demagogues. The forging of national citizenship is inherently a call for an educated populace, for public debate and informed decision-making. Lifting the current FCC rules against market concentration will act only against the development of these attributes. The great privilege to carry an informed discussion of current events, both locally and globally, is part of the founding philosophy of this country. If the avenues for sharing information are restricted to very few, then we fear that the quality of the information presented will decay. What is the value of varied information sources when they are controlled by a single voice?

Where is one to receive information when media outlets are increasingly homogenized? Where is one to receive information when new independent media outlets are unable to achieve an audience because that audience itself has been dumbed-down by lifelong exposure to condensed media forms such as network television or the homogenized newspaper, identical in every city?

Freedom of expression and the ability to say things that are potentially challenging to audiences at large and possibly critical of society's special interests lies at the heart of the independent media maker's business. If the channels to a potential audience—cable programming channels, local television stations, or newspapers that promote and review independent works—fall into the hands of even fewer corporate owners, sharing the work of any independent artist will become much harder.

The lifting of current FCC regulations will not help address this situation. In fact, it will act to hasten the already pathetic situation that is at hand. It will, however, act in the fiscal interests of powerful media conglomerates which already dominate the control of information that most domestic residents have access to. In such an environment, the commercial interest inevitably compromises the public interest.

The FCC has rules limiting ownership to preserve the ecology of a healthy marketplace of ideas. If the FCC undermines this ecology by removing the rules, it undermines the future health of the marketplace of information. If we exist in an environment in which our news outlets have merged together, both print and broadcast, our ability to open informed discussion is restricted.

The Global Resource Action Center for the Environment urges you to rule in the public interest on this matter. The public interest will be served by preserving the FCC's Broadcast Media ownership rules. Ownership rules are necessary to promote diversity and competition in our media, and ultimately, to support our economy and democracy.

Thank you,
Alice Slater
President

